

Message Text

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64

ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 TRSE-00 AGR-05 INSE-00 CAB-02

CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00

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FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7011

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, BF

SUBJ: CIVAIR PRECLEARANCE FOR FREEPORT

REF: (A) STATE 162948; (B) NASSAU 1075

1. EMBASSY ECON OFFICER ATTENDED A MEETING CALLED BY PERMSEC, MINISTRY OF TOURISM CONCERNING PRECLEARANCE AT FREEPORT. US HEAD OF CUSTOMS NASSAU AND AIRLINE REPRESENTATIVES WERE ALSO PRESENT. PURPOSE OF MEETING WAS TO INFORM AIRLINE REPS OF PROGRESS ON PLANS FOR FREEPORT PRECLEARANCE FACILITY AND ASCERTAIN AIRLINE SUPPORT FOR SAME.

2. PERMSEC REPORTED THAT DISCUSSIONS HAVE TAKEN PLACE BETWEEN MINISTRY OF TOURISM OFFICIALS, INCLUDING MINISTER MAYNARD, OFFICIALS OF THE GRAND BAHAMA PORT AUTHORITY, GRAND BAHAMA DEVELOPMENT CO AND THE FREEPORT AIRPORT COMPANY. AFTER THESE DISCUSSIONS THE GCOB'S ARCHITECT, DON BROGDEN, WHO WORKED ON THE NASSAU PRECLEARANCE FACILITIES, VISITED FREEPORT AND COMPLETED A SURVEY OF NEEDED FACILITIES, COST, ETC. HIS ESTIMATE FOR BUILDING SEPARATE FACILITIES IS DOLS 500,000.

3. THE GRAND BAHAMA PORT AUTHORITY SUBMITTED A DETAILED PLAN TO THE MINTOURISM FOR THEIR APPROVAL WHICH INCLUDED FINANCING SUGGESTION OF INCREASING TOURIST SURCHARGE FROM 4 PERCENT TO

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6 PERCENT. MINISTRY OF TOURISM RAISED QUESTIONS CONCERNING

THE FINANCING AND HAS ASKED THE PORT AUTHORITY TO REVIEW ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF FINANCING OR OF REDUCING COST.

4. PERMSEC ASKED AIRLINES IF THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO SUPPORT A PRECLEARANCE UNIT IN FREEPORT ON THE SAME BASIS THAT THEY DO IN NASSAU. ALL OF THE AIRLINES INVOLVED (EASTERN, DELTA, MACKEY, SHAWNEE AND BAHAMASAIR) STRONGLY ENDORSE THE IDEA OF A UNIT IN FREEPORT.

5. EMBASSY COMMENT: IT IS QUITE CLEAR FROM THE DISCUSSION AT THIS MEETING AND OTHER CONVERSATIONS ECON OFFICER HAS HAD WITH PORT AUTHORITY MANAGEMENT THAT ALL INVOLVED WITH DISCUSSION TO DATE BELIEVE ONLY OBSTACLE TO ESTABLISHING PRECLEARANCE UNIT IN FREEPORT IS A CONCRETE FINANCIAL PACKAGE AND THAT USG APPROVAL IS PRO FORMA. EMBASSY'S UNDERSTANDING OF ARTICLE 2 OF PRECLEARANCE AGREEMENT OF APRIL 1974 (QUOTE PRECLEARANCE SHALL BE CONDUCTED AT NASSAU AND, UPON MUTUAL AGREEMENT OF THE PARTIES EXPRESSED IN WRITING, MAY BE ESTABLISHED AT ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS IN THE BAHAMAS UNQUOTE) IS THAT IT DOES NOT, REPEAT NOT, IMPLY ANY PRIOR COMMITMENT ON PART OF USG TO AGREE TO ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS IN THE BAHAMAS. WE SEE PROS AND CONS FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT WHICH WE BELIEVE OUGHT TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION AND WILL OFFER THEM FOR DEPARTMENT'S REACTION AS SOON AS WE HAVE CLEARER UNDERSTANDING OF USG POSITION FROM RESPONSES TO (A) THROUGH (C) BELOW.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: (A) EMBASSY REQUESTS DEPARTMENT TO CONFIRM EMBASSY'S INTERPRETATION OF AGREEMENT AS PER ABOVE, SPECIFICALLY THERE IS NO PRIOR USG COMMITMENT TO EXTENDING PRECLEARANCE TO FREEPORT. B) IF EMBASSY'S INTERPRETATION IS CORRECT WE REQUEST AUTHORITY TO APPROACH MINEXTAFF THROUGH A DIPLOMATIC NOTE STATING THAT WE UNDERSTAND THAT DETAILED DISCUSSIONS OF A TECHNICAL NATURE ARE TAKING PLACE BETWEEN GCOB OFFICIALS AND INTERESTED PARTIES AND THAT WHILE THE USG IS PREPARED TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY OF A PRECLEARANCE FACILITY FOR FREEPORT THERE IS NO PRIOR COMMITMENT ON OUR PART TO AGREE TO SUCH PROPOSAL. C) EMBASSY REQUESTS THAT DEPARTMENT DISCUSS ISSUE WITH PRECLEARANCE AGENCIES (CUSTOMS, INS AND AGRICULTURE) AND ADVISE US OF WASHINGTON VIEW. COMMENTS MADE BY PRECLEARANCE REPRESENTATIVES HERE GIVE IMPRESSION THAT HOME AGENCY APPROVAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAD ALREADY BEEN GIVEN OR COULD BE ASSUMED, WITH ONLY CAVEAT AVAILABILITY OF PERSONNEL.
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